

Review

regarding a competition for an associate professor in professional field 2.3 *History of Philosophy (Bulgarian Philosophical Culture)* at IFS (Department *History of Philosophical and Scientific Ideas*), announced in SG No. 57 of 22.07.2022, with a candidate Chief assistant Dr. Kamelia Kirilova Zhabilova;

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Raicho Vangelov Pozharliev, Department of Philosophy at the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Only one candidate participates in the competition for the academic position of "associate professor" in the above-mentioned field, announced for the needs of the IFS – the Chief Assistant Dr. Kamelia Zhabilova. The presented by her documentation is complete and prepared in accordance with the regulatory requirements. The proposed reference shows that the candidate Chief Assistant Zhabilova meets the minimum scientometric requirements necessary for the occupation of the corresponding academic position. She is a doctor of philosophy since 2004.

For the needs of the current competition, Kamelia Zhabilova provides a published habilitation thesis "Nietzsche. Toposes of the Spirit" (ed. Faber, 2022); a study from 2009, dedicated to Bulgarian philosophical aesthetics; as well as the article "The Balkans in the mental cartography of Bulgarian identity", touching on the important problem of the role of symbolic archetypes characteristic of a certain culture in constituting a specific historical type of spirituality. The mentioned three publications were not included among the proposed texts when Kamelia obtained the educational-scientific degree "doctor" (2004) and the academic position "chief assistant" (2007). The academic reference given for the competition shows that in the period after the doctoral defense, the assistant Zhabilova has published over 30 articles and studies in prestigious Bulgarian academic editions; she is a member of two editorial boards of philosophical journals and has participated in a number of research projects. The list of citations related to the theoretical activity of Dr. Zhabilova is satisfactory. All this makes Kamelia Zhabilova's candidacy for the mentioned academic position completely legitimate. I also declare that there is no conflict of interest of any kind that could prevent the present review.

As a colleague and former teacher of Kamelia Zhabilova, which implies that I am generally familiar with her scientific pursuits and research career, I will note that I like her persistence and her concentration on the topic of "Nietzsche" from her student years until today. It should be noted that her interest does not consist in some boring and pedantic delving into the texts of the German philosopher, but above all in the original interpretation of the specificity of Nietzsche's cognitive discourse and of its

potentials for application in the field of philosophical and cultural studies. Labeling this discourse as morbid is certainly fair, but insufficient.

The connection of basic ideas in Nietzsche's work with his numerous diseases has been sufficiently commented and studied. A specific expression of this relationship is both the findings of the grumpily disgusting language with which Nietzsche commented on the history of Western culture, values and ideas (however, language definitely characteristic of the attitude of sick people to the world), and the attempts at a direct psycho-analytical interpretation of his legacy (for example, in the thesis that the philosopher's sarcastic and discriminatory attitude towards the female gender is regressively related to his not particularly pleasant female environment - of his mother and sister - in childhood; or to the painful memories of meeting certain women in his life). Regarding the latter (with particular emphasis on his youthful infection with syphilis), this type of interpretation, as Granier rightly notes, is simplistic and reductionist. Yes, in a certain sense, every single idea of the philosopher could be connected with his life story, but, it seems to me, Kamelia Zhabilova sets herself the task of not reconstructing in a hermetic way the philosophical content of his texts from the life path of the thinker, but to construct, following Nietzsche's example, a new model for knowledge and attitude towards the world. By explicating this model, Kamelia Zhabilova (in agreement with it, often symbolically and aesthetically) contests - this I find to be her main contribution, the purely historical-philosophical interpretation of his legacy, for example, in emphasizing his anti-rationalism in the context of the Cartesian-Hegelian tradition. Dr. Zhabilova seemed to unravel in Nietzsche's works the meaning of the idea of the so-called "lonely philosopher", not simply in the examples of his solitary and isolated existence (unmarried, with few friends, misunderstood by his contemporaries, living and writing not so much in his home, but in rural mountain hotels), but residing in the immanence of that, with which he connects his personal life - with the pulsations (disease and those of health) of the energies of corporeality; with the experience of the body implanting in itself in a psychosomatic and not so reflexively rational way various toposes - geographical environment, food, climate, cultural and geopolitical identity, etc.

It is precisely this bodily experience-cognition that is the true model and the true critique of idealism, of the idea of autonomous consciousness and reason, of the dualism between world and language (understood only in the sense of categories as abstract and universal signs for the principles of being). That is why Nietzsche's language is not analytically classifying the trajectories of being, but is metaphorical, symbolic, mythical in spirit, not explaining, but experiencing the world in the energies or impotence of his own subjectivity. Kamellia's achievement is in the launched by her Nietzschean model of **auto-bio- graphy**, which is not a reflexive chronology of external events in the philosopher's life, but is authorship - self-reflexivity of the theory, referred not to the abstract universal Me, but to one's

own bio (life) type of expression (graphing), and lastly - as graphy, i.e. the specific stylistics of individual experience, and also a topology in a chronotopically cultural-geographical sense. Chief Assistant Zhabilova calls this a "breakthrough in philosophy", although, I would add, we find elements of such psychosomatic proto-reflection, both in Dilthey in his idea of vital types of thinking, and in Feuerbach in his physiology of the spirit. My question to Kamelia Zhabilova concerns the relationship of personal spiritual physiognomy in Nietzsche's philosophy with the views of those two his contemporaries.

Undoubtedly, however, the auto-biographical personal substance of the Nietzschean Reflections opens up multiple horizons and meaningful possibilities for interpretation. First: in relation to the actual understanding of the turning points in Nietzsche's work itself, that is, in relation to the problem of its periodization. The famous scheme for the three periods - early (with the dominance of cultural-historical themes); middle - of scientific-critical reflection and of the replacement of the old logos metaphysics with that of vitality; third - of overcoming and self-overcoming in the vortex of the superhuman and the will for power; must be understood as stages of the transition from knowledge to madness. But exactly this insanity, or if we want - madness (life without God) is a kind of alternative to classical philosophizing, and indeed, this third period of insanity, based on his own bodily experience, is laid down as a worldwide appeal, in the mirror of which the future of man could be seen, as well as his current geo-political boundaries (and this, according to Nietzsche, is not understood by the majority of his contemporaries). It is precisely this, alternative to classical philosophy, type of madness that is a metaphor for the counteraction against abstract, universalistic knowledge or moral civilizational stereotypes, which allows the late Nietzsche to provocatively exclaim: "Why am I so wise?", "Why do I write such good books?". The madness is a mask of provocation.

I will note, reading Kamelia's book, that as a productive result of this 'becoming of knowledge', through the 'becoming of oneself', one can consider, as Zhabilova correctly writes, the geopolitical interpretation of the types of mentality (German, French, Russian, but also more locally – Piedmontese, Leipzig, etc.) becomes possible, precisely from the point of view of Nietzsche's late philosophy. I will also note that although Camellia quotes J. Deleuze in his opinion that the geopolitical and geographical typology of the spirit is a discovery of Nietzsche, this assessment is not entirely fair. The beginnings of a similar approach are also found in Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, and in Feuerbach, who directly relates the differences between the French and German spirit to the practice of two antipodean types of eating among the respective peoples - the refined and civilized French eating, and the tasteless, satiating consumption characteristic of the Germans. In this regard, I cannot but express my satisfaction with the fact that Dr. Zhabilova does not fail to mention in her analysis as an invariable element of the

bodily type of knowledge in Nietzsche's philosophy the role of the phenomenon of eating, i.e. that she also considered the gastrosophical potentials of his philosophy, something to which I myself also paid special attention.

I return to the idea of Kamelia Zhabilova, that just as it is mandatory to interpret Nietzsche's work in harmony with his bodily experience and stylistics, adequate to the philosopher, his methodology could also be a starting point in relation to other research topics.

A vivid example in this direction is her text "The Balkans in the mental cartography of the Bulgarian identity". In the Nietzschean sense, a geographical reality such as the Balkans is understood as a symbolic instance, reflected in a variety of ways in artistic, political and historical literature, which instance has settled over time as a meaningful pedestal in the formation of Bulgarian self-awareness and identity. The Balkans as an object of "mental cartography" tightly synthesizes that complex of sensory experienced and morally reflected characteristics through which the "Bulgarian" in us can be thought. The sounds of the birds and the noise of the trees, the freshness of the air and the serenity, the rum of the clear waters, the gusts of the wind and the storms, on the one hand, and on the other - the moral symbols associated with the ideas of the mountain – as a protector of the local people from the enemies-infidels, and as the topos of heroism (of the Bulgarian self-sacrificing volunteer soldiers of Shipka – “opalchenci”), are not only constituting the phenomenon as a specific “place of collective memory” (Nora), but also as a spiritually active element of national identity. Thus, sensory-visual beauty and sublime spiritual values unite in the topos of the Bulgarian historical life and create a specific layer of our mentality. In the text about the Balkans, Kamelia Zhabilova directly tries to test the possibilities of the Nietzschean methodological model in relation to the knowledge of a specific phenomenon in our country.

In the second part of her habilitation thesis "The Biography of Nietzsche in Bulgaria" the theoretical view is as if reversed and aims to reconstruct the transformations in the receptions of a philosophy through the prism of another (not German, French or Russian, but Bulgarian) socio-cultural context and experience. Kamelia Zhabilova traces both the divergences regarding this Bulgarian spiritual experience (in the disputes of intellectuals about concepts such as "superman" and the "eternal return"), as well as the grounds for identifying with it, using the example of the work of the "Real Nietzschean" - Pencho Slaveykov. This identification with Nietzsche in the spiritual world of the poet, in the context of the vicissitudes of his life, in his ("On the Island of the Blessed") elitist version of the creator, similar to that of the German philosopher and born of similar infirmity and illness, is really vitally justified, not

enlightened and epigonically sewn from the outside. This part of the monograph, and in the context of the idea of the geographical profile and the other topos of thinking, fits into the tradition of debates about the reading of Nietzsche in bourgeois Bulgaria, and continues it in my opinion fruitfully.

The reading of Dr. Zhabilova's texts, presented for the current competition and habilitation, shows the candidate's theoretical competence and scientific qualities. Zhabilova's texts in some parts seem extremely laconic (this is compensated by extensive analyzes in other places), but in no case self-serving and thoughtless. Kamelia demonstrates that quality of the philosophical mind that I value most - conceptuality, the ability to encompass the field of study through clear ideas and principles. The literature that Zhabilova uses is in three languages, and is sufficiently extensive (over 100 titles) and valuable. Of course, some comments and questions could also be made. For example, I would have liked to find in the texts still more reflections on the auto-biographical model and style of the philosopher, at the expense of the important, but beyond the main idea of Kamelia, recreation of the whole philosophy of Nietzsche. The second part of the book (dedicated to Nietzsche in Bulgaria) should more closely reactivate the ideas in the first one (the two parts are somehow incoherently combined). When it comes to the Nietzschean bodily discourse, perhaps more attention should be paid precisely to the individual bodily modes and their specific influence on the philosopher's way of thinking.

However, these remarks are not able to refute my firm belief that Dr. Kamelia Zhabilova has all those qualities that a serious scholar and theoretician must have. Therefore, without hesitation, I vote for awarding her the academic position of "associate professor" and recommend the esteemed jury to do the same.

10.11.2022,

Sofia

Prof. Dr. Raicho Vangelov Pozharliev

